

Tick-talks hearing is longest in Dade court

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Arguments by opposing attorneys Monday in the celebrated Tick-Talks narcotics case wrapped up what has become known as the longest pretrial hearing in Dade Circuit Court history.

Judge Gerald Kogan is not expected to rule for several weeks on whether to prevent more than 1,000 hours of wiretap evidence collected in a six-month Miami Police Department probe from being presented to a jury. The 26 defendants, charged with trafficking in marijuana and cocaine and conspiracy, face trial Aug. 23.

The Tick-Talks case, named because one electronic listening device was placed in a wall clock, has now gone through an eight-week hearing on the manner the wiretaps were obtained and used. Testimony in the evidence-suppression hearing ended the first week in June. Kogan gave attorneys time to prepare legal memoranda for Monday's closing arguments.

Defense attorneys Kirk Munroe,

William Cagney and Douglas Williams said there are more than 30 legal deficiencies in the state's case, any one of which, they argued, should compel suppression.

"It's like a Great White Shark swimming into a bunch of seals and trying to decide which to gobble up first because they all look so fat and delicious," Williams said.

Defense attorneys contended that the state's key informant — ex-spy, admitted bomber-assassin and terrorist Ricardo (Monkey) Morales — was not a sufficiently credible witness on which to base the wiretap request. They also suggested that the police did not exhaust, as wiretap laws require, all other ways of probing the drug organization allegedly headed by onetime federal witness Carlos Quesada.

But assistant state attorneys Kieran Fallon and Joel Rosenblatt argued that the information provided by Morales was accurate. "Perhaps, he's not the most desirable person around, but his information was valid and justified," Fallon said.